



# GATHER AT THE TABLE

A CALL FOR COMMUNITIES MARKED BY LOVE AND BELONGING

Amar D. Peterman and Nicholas Tangen



**We suggest an imagination of Christian community that is incarnational, sacramental, contextual, and relational, rooted in Christ and committed to the flourishing of the common good. This imagination has the power to transform local congregations and communities, and throughout history has proven to have the capacity to transform entire nations.**



## SETTING THE TABLE

“Healing is about taking the time to notice what gets in the way of feeling connected to your life, your community, and your sense of possibility. Healing, at its core, is about slowing down so that we can better listen, to ourselves and each other.”

- Susan Raffo

When our bodies are gathered together in community, energy moves through the collective. Perhaps we may even say that there is some good science to back up Paul’s emphasis on the importance of the church as the Body of Christ, needing connection to make up the health of the whole. Our hearts and bodies can be reminded of this when we slow down, breathe together, sing together, hum together. Consider opening together with a favorite song or try this body practice from Ellie Roscher’s *The Embodied Path*:

Move your body without overthinking it. Maybe take a few shoulder rolls or a slow head roll. Then on three subsequent exhales, hum in a low pitch from deep in your belly, feeling the vibration in your chest and the back of your throat. Keep the sound smooth and consistent. As you hum, notice if you want to rock, stand or place a hand on your body to ground yourself. Allow the sound and rhythm to soothe you. Put your note out into the universe.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. What are some of your own experiences of authentic Christian community? What were the qualities that made those experiences especially impactful?
2. What are some of your own experiences where a Christian community has done the opposite and contributed to harm? What qualities do you think make these negative experiences possible?
3. How would you describe a “common good” for your own context and community? What role does community play in your own understanding of the “common good”?
4. In your own experience, what are the barriers to authentic community?
5. Why does community grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ still matter today?

## CLOSING

What is the “low-hanging fruit” step you could take for yourself and/or your congregation in response to this discussion today?

*A low hanging fruit is something you could easily do this coming week.*

Given this theme and your context; what is one “moonshot” you could imagine?

*A moon shot is a giant leap into relationship and connection that would require monumental effort but be totally amazing.*